

Nordic and Baltic Region Workshop on Agroecology Living Labs

December 1 and 2, SAGRO Billund, Denmark.

Organisers: The Department of Agroecology, Aarhus University and the ALL-READY
Coordination and Support Action

Background and Objectives:

The green transition requires that new knowledge, technologies and farming systems are continuously developed, made relevant and adopted at an increasingly swift pace. But how do we do this? What works and what does not work? How do we incentivize innovation within the agri-food sector? Recent Horizon Europe missions and partnership initiatives that stem from the Green Deal and the Farm to Fork strategy, emphasize the role of living labs as methods to co-create knowledge and integrate research and innovation processes by bringing farmers, researchers and advisory services closer together. The approach implies the testing of new agricultural practices and technologies in real-life settings, structured as living labs, with a view to improve their effectiveness and accelerate the green transition.

In the Nordic context, the role of living labs in promoting soil health were discussed in a webinar¹ and at a Nordic Council seminar in the first half of 2022. Both events served to clarify the policies and the concepts involved, with the ambition to increase Nordic cooperation, in the light of the Horizon Europe Soil Mission which plans to support 100 soil health living labs in Europe. The events confirmed that in the Nordic countries, the agricultural knowledge and innovation systems, share many characteristics, including high levels of integration, and many open innovation arrangements. The events also demonstrated that in some Nordic countries, agri-food living labs are well established and highly structured, but take many forms.

Adopting a broader agricultural innovation perspective than soil health, and by broadening the geographical scope to cover the Baltic countries, the present workshop adds to the previous meetings, by focusing on the Horizon Europe candidate *Partnership on Agroecology, Living Labs and Research Infrastructures*² (the Partnership from now on) as a potential resource for stimulating innovation and, indeed, cooperation. The workshop is one of four agroecology living lab workshops carried out in various regions of Europe by the European Commission supported ALL-READY project, which works on mobilizing networks of living labs and research infrastructures as part of Partnership preparation. Starting in 2023, the 7-year duration, up to EUR 300 million Partnership, aims to enable European farming systems to become more sustainable. While yet to be detailed, key Partnership activities will include support to agroecology living labs through research to be carried out in and by living labs, by the strengthening of

¹ <https://projects.au.dk/unearned-wealth/news-and-events/vis/artikel/webinar-nordic-living-labs-and-lighthouses>

² https://ec.europa.eu/info/files/european-partnership-accelerating-farming-systems-transition-agro-ecology-living-labs-and-research-infrastructures_en

networks of living labs and by improving the access to and use of research infrastructures.

However, many questions remain with respect to how agroecology living labs and research infrastructures can be leveraged to support the green transition in the agri-food sector, as envisaged in the Horizon Europe initiatives and in general. The questions include how to design and facilitate closer cooperation between farmers, advisory services, research, public authorities and other stakeholders in living labs in the Nordic and Baltic regions? More clarity and the sharing of experiences in this regards is likely to enhance Nordic and Baltic benefits from, and contributions to, the Horizon Europe initiatives. On this background, the objectives of the workshop are:

Practice level:

- Explore how innovation at farm level and at research level may be further integrated: barriers and opportunities. What incentives are needed?
- Share experiences on how researchers, advisory services and farmers interact in living labs. What works, what does not?

Programme level:

- To inform networks(s) of Nordic and Baltic agricultural living labs, research infrastructures and other stakeholders about the Partnership and its opportunities
- Explore how Nordic and Baltic living labs may come together in living lab networks in relation to the Partnership
- Assess stakeholder approaches and perceptions of agricultural living labs in relation to the Partnership vision of an agroecology transition

Participants:

Nordic and Baltic agricultural living labs and other open innovation arrangements. Farmers, advisory bodies, research and other stakeholders.

Venue:

SAGRO Billund, Majsmarken 1. 7190 Billund

Programme:

Thursday December 1:

14:30: Depart for excursion near Billund, south-central Jutland

15:00-17:00: Visit to conservation agriculture dairy farm

18:00: Dinner (Billund)

Friday December 2:

Session 1: Context – Setting the Scene (09:00 – 10:00)

09:00-09:10: Welcome, programme and participant's introductions

09:10-09:25: The need for bringing knowledge and technologies to increased use for the green transition (Jørgen E Olesen)

09:25-09:35: What are agroecology living labs? What are the innovation rationales for living labs as means to accelerate the green transition? (Torsten Rødel Berg)

09:35-09:45: The ALL-READY project and the Agroecology, Living Labs and Research Infrastructure Partnership (tbd)

09:45-10:00: Questions over coffee/tea, rolls

Session 2: Green transition innovation experiences highlighting incentives, challenges and achievements (10:00-12:00)

On-farm innovation

10:00-10:15: Feed: (tbc)

10:15-10:30: Conservation Agriculture (tbc)

Innovation in living labs and living lab-like projects:

10:30-10:45: Finnish Living Lab (tbc)

10:45-11:00: Norwegian Living Lab (tbc)

11:00-11:15: Swedish Living Lab (tbc)

11:15-11:30: Danish Living Lab (CarbonFarm (tbc)

11:30-11:45: Estonian Living Lab or other stakeholder (tbc)

11:45-12:00: Lithuanian Living Lab or other stakeholder (tbc)

12:00-12:15: Latvian Living Labs or other stakeholders (tbc)

12:15-12:30: Discussion on challenges and achievements

12:30-13:00: Lunch

Session 3: Bringing farmers, advisory services and research together to accelerate the green transition (13:00-14:30)

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| 13:00-13:10: | Research perspectives: Balancing on-station and on-farm research: challenges and possibilities for research in living-lab settings (Lars Munkholm) |
| 13:10-13:20: | Advisory services perspectives: Rethinking the role of the advisory services in living labs (tbd: SAGRO or SEGES or other Baltic-Nordic extension representative) |
| 13:20-13:30: | Farmer perspectives: Incentives and framework conditions for innovation (tbd) |
| 13:30-14:15 | Groups: Reflection and discussion on how a network of living labs and research infrastructures in the future Partnership could be designed to accelerate the green transition? (tbd) |
| 14:15-14:30: | Group feedback over coffee/tea, cake |

Session 4: The Nordic and Baltic Dimension (14:30-15.15)

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| 14:30 – 14:40: | Nordic and Baltic contributions to a network of living labs in the future partnership in a knowledge and innovation perspective (Martin) |
| 14:30 -15:00: | Roundtable discussion on Nordic and Baltic challenges and opportunities as regards cooperation in relation to Horizon Europe and other initiatives. How may we best benefit from, or contribute to these initiatives? |
| 15:00-15:15: | Rounding off, next steps. |